United Nations A/CN.10/PV.233

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

233rd Meeting
Tuesday, 15 February 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Acting Chairman: Ms. Arce de Jeannet ..... (Mexico)

In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: I declare open the 233rd meeting and the resumed 1999 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

As has been the practice in previous years, the Disarmament Commission is convened this afternoon for a brief session to deal with its unfinished organizational matters related to the upcoming 2000 substantive session. These include the decision on the dates of the session, the election of the Chairman of the Commission for the 2000 substantive session, the election of other members of the Bureau, an agreement on substantive items to be included on the Commission's agenda, the appointment of the Chairmen of Working Groups and, finally, the adoption of a draft programme of work for the first week of the substantive session.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: Allow me to draw the attention of delegations to document A/CN.10/L.45, which contains the agenda of the organizational session that was adopted at our earlier meeting, in December 1999. Any delegation that does not have a copy of this document may request one at the window located in the back of the chamber.

As that document indicates, the third item on the agenda is the election of the Chairman and other officers of the Bureau for the period of substantive meetings to be held in the year 2000. In accordance with the principle of rotation among the various regional groups, this year the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission goes to the Group of Asian States. I am pleased to inform the members of the Commission that the Group of Asian States has endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Minister for Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 2000.

If I hear no comments, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to elect Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the Chairman by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now declare that Mr. Javad Zarif has been elected the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 2000.

Unfortunately, Mr. Zarif cannot be with us today because he had to attend a very important meeting at the ministerial level being held at his capital. Nevertheless, allow me to say that Mr. Zarif, who is in charge of legal and international affairs at the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a very distinguished diplomat who is also well known at the United Nations, particularly for his wide experience and vast knowledge in the field of disarmament. I am convinced that this broad experience in the United Nations and in the field of disarmament will make possible the most efficient and

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successful conduct of the business of the Disarmament Commission.

Allow me, on behalf of all the members of the Commission, to ask the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Hadi Nejad Hosseinian, to convey our congratulations to Mr. Zarif on his election to this important post and to the duties he will have before him.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): On behalf of Mr. Zarif, the incoming Chairman of the Disarmament Commission in the year 2000, and on my own behalf, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the Acting Chairman's sincere efforts during the last four months. Fortunately, under her able guidance and leadership, the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission has succeeded in concluding some important aspects of the work of the Commission. The resolution of the organizational issues — namely, the dates and duration of the Commission session — will now enable us to concentrate on the substantive items on the Commission's agenda, particularly on the nuclear disarmament item.

This, in fact, will determine the scope of Mr. Zarif's consultations in the coming weeks. From my consultations with him, I understand that he intends to convene consultations at New York at an appropriate time on the identification of substantive agenda items, well before the commencement of the Commission's formal session. The success of those consultations will certainly require the collective understanding and cooperation of all of us, which is something that has been well manifested in the course of the current consultations.

In conclusion, may I, on behalf of the Chairman and on my own behalf, express our gratitude for the confidence you have shown in endorsing Mr. Zarif's nomination. I am certain that he will respond to your confidence with his dedicated efforts to lead the discussions in the forthcoming session of the Disarmament Commission to, one hopes, a successful conclusion.

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* I would now like to proceed to the election of the other members of the Bureau, namely, the eight Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all, Madam, to pay tribute to you for the efforts you have been making over the past several months at the helm of our Committee. I wish also to express to you our appreciation for the work you have done while heading the Disarmament Commission as Acting Chairman.

Allow me also to congratulate the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran on its well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. The experience and professional expertise of Mr. Zarif, Deputy Minister for Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are well known to all. We are convinced that under his clear-sighted guidance, and thanks to his experience and skills, the Committee will be able to make headway and achieve the hoped-for results.

I should like to inform the Commission that the African Group has met and endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Samuel Amehou, Minister Counsellor to the Mission of Benin, for the post of Rapporteur. Mr. Amehou is well known to our Commission and to our colleagues here. We value highly his contributions as well as his outstanding personal qualities and professional expertise, in particular in the area of disarmament.

The African Group has also endorsed the candidacy of Sierra Leone for a vice-chairmanship. I am pleased, therefore, to request the Commission, on behalf of the African Group, to accept the African candidacies of Mr. Amehou as Rapporteur and of Sierra Leone for a vice-chairmanship, thereby allowing the Bureau to complete its membership.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The coordinators of the regional groups have also informed me that three candidates have been proposed for a vice-chairmanship: Mr. Hazairin Pohan of Indonesia; Mr. Jacques Louis Boisson, Permanent Representative of Monaco; and Mr. Luis Estévez-López of Guatemala.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect the aforementioned representatives to the Bureau of the Disarmament Commission for the 2000 substantive session.

It was so decided.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I turn now to the election of the Rapporteur of the Commission. We have taken note of the representative of Algeria's statement that the African Group has nominated Mr. Samuel Amehou of Benin for the post of Rapporteur. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to elect, by acclamation, Mr. Samuel

Amehou of Benin to the post of Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission for the 2000 session.

It was so decided.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to extend my warmest congratulations to the Chairman, the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur on their election to the Bureau of the Disarmament Commission. I am certain that they will make outstanding contributions to this year's work.

I would like also to ask the regional groups to continue with their internal consultations in order that we may have one candidate from the Group of Western and other States for one vice-chairmanship; one candidate from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for one vice-chairmanship; and two candidates from the Group of Eastern European States for two vice-chairmanships.

As the Committee is aware, we still have to appoint the two Chairmen of the Working Groups on nuclear disarmament and on conventional arms, respectively. This matter has not yet been resolved, and consultations are ongoing. The nomination of the two Chairmen of the Working Groups will have to be made formally at a subsequent meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

I would request the regional groups to continue their consultations with a view to nominating candidates to chair those Working Groups. I would like to ask all of the members of the Commission to postpone the appointment of those Chairmen to a later date, since we have no candidates at this time.

Draft provisional agenda for the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 2000

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee is aware of the efforts that were deployed by the Member States in order to arrive at a consensus on the two items for this year's substantive session. However, despite intensive consultations, no agreement has yet been forthcoming.

I would like to propose to delegations that the newly elected Bureau consider designating one of the Vice-Chairmen to oversee the continuation of informal consultations on the two items on the agenda of the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, with the understanding that once the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission arrives in New York, we will all participate in whatever consultations Mr. Zarif convenes. If I hear no objection, we will proceed as I have suggested.

It was so decided.

Organizational matters

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: Members have before them two documents: document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.1 and Informal Paper No. 1, containing the timetable for the first week of the Commission's session, from 26 to 30 June.

As members will recall, at its organizational session in December 1999, the Commission had the opportunity to discuss the question of dates for the 2000 substantive session, but no official decision was taken. At that time, we wee considering the period from 3 to 21 April, but these dates proved unacceptable. Further informal consultations were therefore held and various alternatives considered. Without establishing a precedent for coming years, it was decided informally that the Disarmament Commission would meet this year for two weeks from 26 June to 7 July.

The informal consultations resulted in an understanding that I shall read out:

(spoke in English)

> "The agreement to convene the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission for two weeks is on an exceptional basis and will not establish a precedent for coming years. The postponement of dates previously notified in advance by the Secretariat should be done only in exceptional cases when the dates are competing with those of other major important disarmament conferences."

(spoke in Spanish)

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the period from 26 June to 7 July in which to hold its 2000 substantive session.

It was so decided.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) *(spoke in French)*: While the decision has been adopted by the Commission and I

have no major difficulty with its wording, I have a mere procedural question to raise.

Will this be part of a decision to be adopted separately by the Commission and then later integrated into its report, or is it solely part of the report which the Commission shall adopt at the end of its substantive session?

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* It is my understanding that the paragraph that I have just read out will be part of the report of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Duarte (Portugal): I should like to make two points. The first is regarding the dates for our session. The European Union (EU) is in a position to agree to these dates *ad referendum*. This is due to internal consultations that we are still holding among ourselves and to some considerations that we need from our capitals. We are, however, very clear on this matter. We agree to the dates that have just been proposed — 26 June to 7 July — *ad referendum*. That is my first point.

Secondly, Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, would like to deliver a brief statement:

> "The European Union regrets that it has been necessary to postpone the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission to the summer. We take this opportunity to recall that this new period, regrettably, coincides with a major important disarmament event: the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The new dates will also create additional difficulties for some delegations inside the European Union, especially regarding the appropriate level of their representation at the meetings. We call upon all States to take the appropriate measures to prevent this situation from occurring in the future.
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> "Regarding the duration of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, we believe that the two-week session will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of its work. Now that the period for the session is in principle established, the European Union considers that it is time to move ahead and to address the substantial issues.
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> "Finally, the European Union would like to congratulate the outgoing Chairman for its remarkable work and to wish to the new Chairman, Iran the best success in its endeavours. The European Union is looking forward to working with the new Chairman."

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* We take due note of the statement just made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Khairat (Egypt): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Madam, for all your efforts that have led to the understanding and agreement about the dates. We shall work closely in order to achieve results on the two subjects.

It is my understanding that the Commission has adopted and agreed upon the dates from 26 June to 7 July. I heard the remarks made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union to the effect that the agreement is *ad referendum*. What is the situation now? Is it final or still *ad referendum*? I do not understand, so I need clarification in this regard.

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* I understand that there is no contradiction between the official decision just taken with respect to the dates for the 2000 substantive session, to be held from 26 June to 7 July, and the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union regarding the *ad referendum* agreement on that group's position that it does not object to the holding of the substantive session on the agreed dates, in respect of which an official decision has been taken.

Mr. Mehta (India): I must thank you, Madam, for all the effort that you have put into getting the issues of the agenda and dates sorted out.

You just announced a decision that, if I understood it correctly, also said that the dates would not be changed except in relation to disarmament work. We are not crystal-gazers; certainly, I am not. One could always envisage some circumstances in which we might fix a date this year and then the heads decide to have an international summit meeting here in New York.

What are we going to do? Should we be binding ourselves with these words? That is the question and, if so, what is the escape route should the circumstance present itself?

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish):* The paragraph I read out was the result of our intensive informal consultations on the matter. The same text was read out at the final meeting of the informal consultations, and no objections were raised about its content. The paragraph is very clear and contains three

elements: first, that the decision that the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission should last two weeks is on an exceptional basis; secondly, that this decision does not establish a precedent for future years and thirdly, that due account must be taken of dates previously notified in advance by the Secretariat and that these will be changed only in exceptional cases, but that at the same time due account must be taken of the disarmament calendar of other forums and in other venues.

In other words, as we are working in the field of disarmament, we must take due account of other disarmament meetings. This has been the case in the past, and we have tried to avoid overlap between disarmament meetings taking place in different venues. I believe that this is a legitimate, valid concern and that we must continue to take it into account in future. I believe that the understanding reached by delegations on this point is clear enough to guide our future negotiations.

Let us turn now to the work programme and timetable for the first week of our substantive session. It has become an established practice to consider our working timetable on a weekly basis. Thus, Informal Paper No. 1 sets out the working timetable for the first week, 26 to 30 June. Members will note that Monday and Tuesday are devoted to general debate, and that the remaining three days are set aside for meetings of the two working groups, each of which, on an equal footing, will meet three times. The timetable for the second week will be discussed once the substantive session has begun.

If I hear no objection I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to approve the working timetable for the period 26-30 June as contained in Informal Paper No. 1.

It was so decided.

The Acting Chairman *(spoke in Spanish)*: I shall now suspend the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission; it will resume once we have reached agreement on the two substantive items for the agenda of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.